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STATE FOR EUR/WE AND EEB/ESC/TFS, NSC FOR E. FARR, TREASURY
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TAGS: [EFIN](#) [PTERE](#) [KTFN](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN/COUNTERTERRORISM - CHARGE'S MEETING WITH
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR CHIEF OF STAFF

REF: MADRID 00490

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Hugo Llorens, for reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (S) The Charge, accompanied by EconOff, met with Gregorio Martinez, Chief of Staff to Interior Minister Rubalcaba, on May 9. Charge stressed the need for better inter-agency cooperation in Spain in the fight against terrorism. Responding to the Charge's expressions of concern regarding the front-page April 28 El Pais article (reftel) suggesting that Barakat Yarkas had financed terrorist cells from his jail cell, Martinez said he would provide information on what had happened. He claimed that designating Yarkas would not have made a practical difference and that, in any event, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been responsible for the lack of action on designating Yarkas. End Summary

COORDINATION KEY

¶2. (S) The Charge emphasized that U.S.-Spanish counterterrorism cooperation continued to be strong and good. Martinez agreed and noted that Spain's experience in fighting ETA had given it plenty of "knowhow" in combating terrorists, including Islamic terrorists. The Charge agreed with this assessment, although he suggested that there remained room for improvement in Spain with respect to better coordination between the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia (CNI - National Intelligence Center), the Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) and the Policia Nacional (National Police). The Charge recalled that in connection with the January 19 Barcelona arrests of 14 suspected Islamic militants, the CNI had tasked the Guardia Civil with conducting the arrests. Unbeknownst to the Guardia Civil, the Policia Nacional was also investigating some of the same individuals. Spanish authorities feared that there could have been a real problem with the arrest operation had they not discovered immediately prior to the arrests that both national law enforcement agencies were shadowing the Barcelona-based group. Martinez attempted to downplay what had happened, but he certainly understood the Charge's concerns. He agreed that the upcoming May 20 event in the Charge's residence with representatives from U.S. and Spanish law enforcement agencies was a good idea. (Note: Twice a year, we try to bring together American and Spanish counterterrorism officials from different agencies as part of an effort to improve bilateral coordination and avoid "stovepiping.")

APRIL 28 EL PAIS ARTICLE
ON BARAKAT YARKAS POSSIBLY
FINANCING TERRORIST CELLS
FROM JAIL

¶3. (C) The Charge noted that the April 28 article had

elicited concern and questions from the USG. Martinez said that the article was probably a "fabrication." However, he understood that the article which ran in the normally pro-government El Pais that is considered by most observers to be Spain's "newspaper of record," would logically prompt questions. Martinez committed to getting back to the Charge with the facts. The Charge stressed that Barakat Yarkas was a special American concern for two reasons. First, he was connected to the September 11 plot. Second, the USG has been pressing Spain to designate Barakat Yarkas for several years. Martinez responded by saying that a designation would not have made a practical difference. EconOff countered by pointing out that a designation would have frozen Yarkas' assets so presumably he would not have been able to receive and cash (if that is what happened) two checks worth over euros 50,000. Martinez did not respond directly but said that the Ministry of Interior did not oppose specific and ad hoc designations. In fact, Martinez said that the Ministry of Interior had recommended that the Spanish government designate Yarkas and others by getting the Council of Ministers to issue an executive order. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was opposed to this proposal and preferred a more "garantista" (legally watertight) approach that would create a new "mechanism" for designations. The Foreign Ministry approach required legislative action. Martinez said that the inter-agency difference was the reason that no action had been taken to designate Yarkas.

COMMENT

14. (S) Spain's commitment to fighting terrorism is strong. In fact, the Spaniards are good at it. According to the 2007

EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, during the October 1, 2005 to December 31, 2006 period, 257 terrorists were tried and convicted on terrorism charges in the EU. Out of the 257 convictions, 172 were in Spain. However, competition between Spain's intelligence and law enforcement services remains endemic. Regarding the terrorism finance aspect to fighting terrorists, at this stage we are simply not sure what to make of the El Pais article and will have to wait to hear back from Martinez. Should the the El Pais article be accurate, that would of course strengthen our arguments for more expeditious designations.

BIO NOTE

15. (C) Gregorio Martinez has been a good Embassy contact for several years and is also a former International Visitor to the U.S. Martinez told the Charge that he would remain in his position for the time being.

Llorens